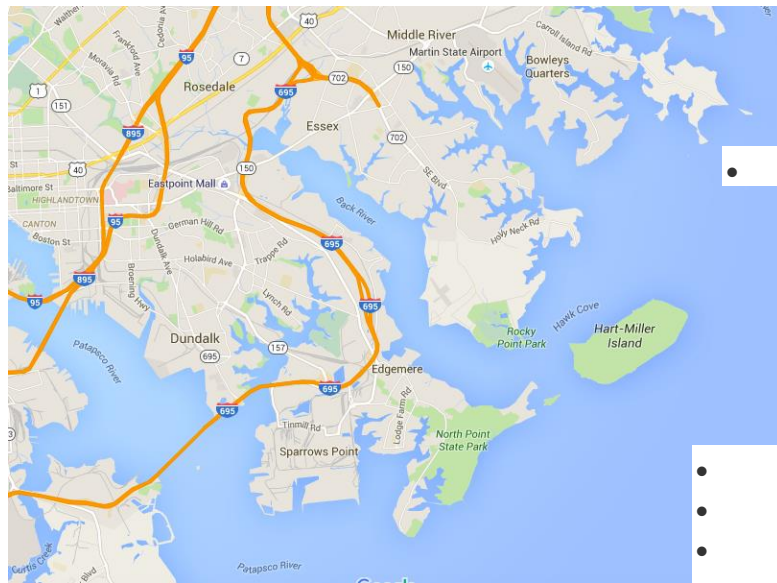


# More to do at Hart-Miller Island this summer

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Google map

Hart-Miller Island State Park is located at the mouth of Back River off the shores of Edgemere and Essex. Starting in May, visitors will have greater access to the interior of the park.

Located at the mouth of Back River, man-made Hart-Miller Island has begun its long-awaited transition from a dredge dump site to a wildlife habitat and state park for boaters, birders and other outdoor enthusiasts.

Until now, visitors could visit the sandy beach in their own boats and also reserve campsites, but starting May 7, they will also be able to rent bicycles, hike on new trails and participate in new programs on the south side of the island.

Before visitors had access to the perimeter, but they now will have access to previously gated areas, said Dean Hughes, who manages the park for the state Department of Natural Resources.

“It will be an opportunity to get into the island,” he said.

Staffers will also be on site five days a week from May through September to host a variety of programs now being developed.

“It’s really exciting to be in the early stages of this, which has been 30 years in the making,” said Hughes, who also oversees North Point State Park in Fort Howard and the Gunpowder Falls State Park in northern Baltimore County.

The park will be open Thursday through Monday to accommodate weekend traffic and closed Tuesday and Wednesday, he said.

In the early 1980s, the Maryland Port Administration, Maryland Environmental Service and DNR joined forces on a plan to maintain shipping channels while simultaneously building up the highly eroded Hart and Miller islands.

The idea was “to create a dike, reunite the two islands and deposit the dredge materials,” Hughes said. Maryland environmental Services is still dewatering and processing dredge materials at the north end. “It’s still an active construction zone with trucks and machinery,” Hughes said.

However, the south end is now ready for expanded public access. “It was started by the previous generation, and we’re taking the torch and developing the area, to be the next and newest state park,” he said.

Hughes said that DNR is hiring for summer jobs at all three of his parks, including open positions at Hart-Miller Island for a park ranger and a maintenance technician. This summer, the department is also looking for life guards, concession people and seasonal staffers to work at the gatehouses at the other two parks, he said. The job posting closes on April 25. The department will be monitoring the visitor traffic with the idea of developing a long-range plan for the island.

“We’ll see how popular the island is going to be,” Hughes said. The island is potentially a major draw for birdwatchers because of the hundreds of species that stop over during migrations. “I was there twice last week, and I have never seen so many ducks,” he said. “There were thousands of them.”

Hughes also envisions future business for boat operators along the Baltimore County shoreline.

“There could be opportunities for private contractors to shuttle people out there,” Hughes said.

For information about camp sites and other services, visit [www.dnr2.maryland.gov](http://www.dnr2.maryland.gov).

For information about jobs, visit [www.dnr2.maryland.gov/Publiclands/Pages/careers.aspx](http://www.dnr2.maryland.gov/Publiclands/Pages/careers.aspx). “Job Listings” are posted on the left under Maryland Park Service.